

Michigan United Conservation Clubs



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To: House Agriculture Committee Members
From: Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Re: House Bills 5822, 5823 and 5824

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs would like to voice its support and thanks for all your work with this current legislation. We strongly support the ability of allowing for greater depredation of any free-ranging feral (free-ranging) swine with a valid hunting license as a good first step in controlling the increasing problem of feral swine.

We also appreciate the legislative findings language naming free-ranging swine as a public nuisance. We must continue to build the public's awareness of these animals as a negative force on the landscape and make sure that they are not depicted as a possible game species for the state. Considering them as a public nuisance helps achieve that goal.

That being said, more protections are needed. It is not too late in Michigan to eradicate these swine off the landscape and we must use every tool at our disposal to do so. The Natural Resource Commission and the Agriculture Commission passed a joint resolution on April 12, 2007 "recommending aggressive action to eliminate feral swine in order to protect animal health, public health, and the environment." MUCC adopted that resolution in its entirety as its policy. Copies of that resolution are included in this packet and outlined in that resolution are action items that should be addressed. We urge this committee to address the eradication issue next and use the joint resolution as a basis for legislation.

Background:

Feral (free-ranging) swine are not native to Michigan's ecosystems. The feral swine population that exists today is thought to be a combination of:

- Eurasian wild boar that originated on farms, privately-owned game ranches, boar breeding facilities, and other enclosed hunting ranches;
- Pigs that have been released by individuals for the purpose of starting local wild, populations to hunt; and
- Escaped or neglected domestic swine.

Feral swine can cause crop damage, pose a serious threat to the health and welfare of domestic swine, endanger humans, impact wildlife populations, and impact the environment by disrupting ecosystems.

Feral swine can carry diseases such as pseudorabies, brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, classic swine fever or trichinosis. Michigan has pseudorabies and swine brucellosis free status. The economic hardship these diseases could cause for swine producers strongly suggests that every precaution should be taken to stop the establishment of feral swine in Michigan.